

STATE OF COLORADO

**Department of Higher Education
COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Bill Owens
Governor

Richard F. O'Donnell
Executive Director

April 5, 2004

The Honorable Bill Owens
Governor
State of Colorado
State Capitol Building
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Governor Owens:

It is our pleasure to present to you the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force to strengthen and improve the Community College System. The Task Force has met ten times since January 9, 2004, and makes the following recommendations:

1. That the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (the State Board) implement a total-fund reduction of at least 35 percent in the administrative costs of the system office. Based on the \$17 million FY04 budget, this reduction represents a cost savings of \$5.95 million and should be redistributed to the colleges or invested in projects that will result in long-term efficiencies. In order to achieve the cost savings, the State Board should:
 - A. Eliminate unnecessary or duplicative positions at the system office.
 - B. Adopt a centralized, standardized, and integrated Information Technology (IT) system, which includes standard software and hardware for all IT functions. The benefits of a centralized IT system offer greater efficiency, reliability, and the ability to use IT as a tool to standardize business functions.
 - C. Restructure distance learning to increase revenues and decrease costs. The new structure would require the CCCS to provide, and all colleges to use exclusively, a common utility infrastructure; it would also maintain a common standard for security and accreditation. Individual colleges will develop and offer their own courses.

- D. All Institutional Research (IR) functions should be performed at the college level or by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education independent of system office support, except for audit functions. This will require the CCCS to maintain one universal database with individual college partitions for virtual privacy, with all data governed by standardized definitions, guidelines, and reporting standards and procedures.
 - E. Investigate and implement improvements to financial-aid business practices and support technology with the goal of reducing the administrative per package cost to \$30. On-campus financial-aid counseling will continue to be available directly to students.
2. The Task Force recommends the continuation of the system office managed by the State Board and the system president. The office should consist of the following functional areas: External Relations and Development, Legal and Human Resources, Finance and Budget, Academic Affairs, Lowry Campus Opportunities, and Information Technologies (IT).
 3. The Board should examine what steps would be necessary to remove itself from the current conveyance agreement with the U.S. Department of Education and to develop to the highest and best use the remainder of the Lowry Campus. Potential changes at the Lowry Campus should be based on discovering ways to increase revenues and decrease costs to the system. The plan will determine the existence of more profitable uses for the remainder of the land not currently used to by Community College of Denver and the Community College of Aurora, both of whom currently utilize the Lowry Campus.
 4. It is recommended that the State Board conduct a comprehensive review of the administrative costs for Career and Technical Education (CTE) to realize future cost savings.
 5. As the State Board begins the process of implementation, it is recommended that documents provided by CCCS staff be used for guidance and adapted as needed.
 6. The State Board should address the concerns identified by at least one of the community college presidents: opting out of the state personnel system, enrollment management tuition discounting policies, relief from state purchasing requirements, State Board policy related to faculty, at-will employment contracts, residence halls, and identifying additional revenue sources for community colleges.

The Task Force also endorsed a Timeline for Implementation – from April of 2004 to July of 2006 - that had been approved by the State Board at its regular meeting on March 10, 2004. The entire Timeline is included in the Executive Summary.

At its first meeting on January 9, 2004, the Task Force decided to hold public forums to obtain comments and concerns from the community college community prior to making its final

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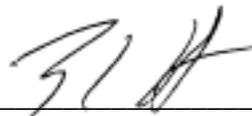
recommendations. 631 people attended the five public forums held between February 23 and March 5 at the following locations: Front Range Community College, Westminster; Community College of Aurora; Community College of Denver; Otero Junior College, La Junta; and Morgan Community College, Fort Morgan. Participants from other colleges joined in by closed-circuit television and teleconferencing. 126 people spoke at the forums and 36 provided written comments to the Task Force.

It is the Task Force's belief that implementing these recommendations will result in a more efficient, effective Community College System for students, faculty, community members and Colorado's taxpayers. The system will be strengthened and improved – one of yours and the Task Force's main goals.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Erjavec
Co-Chair



Tim Foster
Co-Chair